

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

C. Amendments to the Claims.

1. (Currently Amended) A method of verifying a reticle, comprising the steps of:

providing a substrate having a uniform surface;

depositing a non-resist layer over the uniform surface of the substrate;

forming a layer of resist over the non-resist layer;

forming a reticle pattern in the layer of resist;

transferring the reticle pattern to the non-resist layer;

forming a conformal layer over the non-resist layer, wherein the non-resist layer includes a transferred reticle pattern, at least a portion of the transferred reticle pattern extending through the non-resist layer; and

inspecting the transferred reticle pattern for defects by comparing the transferred reticle pattern with a ~~known~~ good reticle pattern.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein:

the conformal layer comprises a conductive material.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein:

the conformal layer comprises titanium.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein:

the conformal layer further comprises a plurality of stacked layers comprising a layer of titanium nitride formed over a layer of titanium.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein:

the transferred reticle pattern in the non-resist layer includes features having a minimum size L, and the conformal layer has a thickness of no more than $1/2L$.

6. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein:

the conformal layer has a thickness of no more than 1000Å.

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7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein:
the non-resist layer comprises silicon oxide.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7, wherein:
the non-resist layer comprises a layer of undoped silicon dioxide formed
on a layer of phosphosilicate glass.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein:
the thickness of the non-resist layer is in the ~~general~~ range of about 2500Å to
about 6000Å.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein:
the thickness of the non-resist layer is at least 5000Å.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein:
the ~~substrate~~-uniform substrate comprises a silicon.

12. (Currently Amended) A method of verifying a reticle, comprising the steps of:
providing a substrate having a uniform surface;
depositing a non-resist layer over the uniform surface of the substrate;
forming a layer of resist over the non-resist layer;
forming a reticle pattern in the layer of resist;
transferring the reticle pattern to the non-resist layer;
forming a conductive conformal layer with a thickness of at least 100Å
over the transferred reticle pattern in the non-resist layer, at least a portion of a
transferred reticle pattern extending through the non-resist layer; and
inspecting the reticle pattern in the deposited layer by comparing the
transferred reticle pattern to a ~~known~~ good reticle pattern.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein:

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inspecting the transferred reticle pattern by means of automatic pattern inspection equipment.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13, wherein:

inspecting the transferred reticle pattern includes automatically aligning a wafer in the automatic pattern inspection equipment with the transferred reticle pattern formed in the non-resist layer.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein:

the transferred reticle pattern comprises a transferred contact reticle pattern.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, further including:

the step of transferring the reticle pattern to the non-resist layer includes etching the non-resist layer, and removing the patterned layer of resist.

17. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising the steps of:

providing a substrate having a uniform surface;

depositing a non-resist layer over the uniform surface of the substrate;

forming a layer of resist over the non-resist layer;

forming a reticle pattern in the layer of resist;

transferring the reticle pattern to the non-resist layer, at least a portion of the transferred reticle pattern extending through the non-resist layer;

forming a conformal layer over the non-resist layer to thereby increase contrast between patterned and non-patterned portions of the non-resist layer; and

inspecting the reticle patterned layer by comparing the transferred reticle pattern to a known-good reticle pattern.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17, wherein:

forming the non-resist layer comprises depositing a silicon oxide containing layer.

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19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17, wherein:

the conformal layer is formed by depositing at least one conductive layer.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, wherein:

the conformal layer further comprises an interconnect adhering layer.

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